

The Cash Box Kings - Holding Court (2015)

Written by bluesever

Tuesday, 08 December 2015 17:03 -

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1. *I Ain't Gonna Be No Monkey Man* - 3:55 2. *Download Blues* - 3:46 3. *Gotta Move Out To The Suburbs* - 3:33 4. *Cash Box Boogie* - 3:46 5. *Hobo Blues* - 3:26 6. *Baby Without You* - 3:55 7. *Juju* - 4:06 8. *Everybody's Fishin'* - 2:57 9. *Out On The Road* - 4:00 10. *Sugar Pea* - 3:33 11. *I Miss You Miss Anne* - 2:33 12. *I'm A Real Lover* - 2:57 13. *Quarter To Blue* - 4:36
Barrelhouse Chuck - Organ, Piano, Vocals (Background) Brad Ber - Bass (Upright) Billy Flynn - Guitar, Guitar (Rhythm) Mark Haines - Drums, Vocals (Background) Joe Nosek - Harmonica, Percussion, Vocals, Vocals (Background) Joel Paterson - Guitar, Vocals (Background) Beau Sample - Bass (Electric), Bass (Upright), Vocals (Background) Kenny "Beedy Eyes" Smith - Drums Oscar Wilson - Vocals, Vocals (Background)

The CBKs return with their third CD for Blind Pig and, as usual, it's excellent. The core of the band remains Joe Nosek on harp and vocals, Oscar Wilson on vocals and Joel Paterson on lead guitar. Long-standing drummer Kenny Smith only appears on three tracks this time around (probably reflecting the demands of his many other projects) and most of the drum duties are taken by Mark Haines. Beau Sample handles the bass with Brad Ber filling in on the three tracks with Kenny. Guests include Billy Flynn who adds rhythm guitar on most tracks and Barrelhouse Chuck who adds keys to six cuts. Joe wrote eight of the tunes here, two with Oscar, and there are five covers.

The album opens with Oscar singing Big Smokey Smothers' "I Ain't Gonna Be No Monkey Man", a classic piece of rocking blues with Brad's bouncing upright bass and Kenny's economical drum style underpinning fine performances from everyone. The next two tunes are both Nosek/Wilson compositions and really summarise what the CBKs are about, classic Chicago blues with lyrics that give a modern twist to the genre. "Download Blues" bemoans the fate of working bands who find that audiences no longer buy CDs but download them, thereby providing no income to the musicians! Behind the lyrics is a great shuffle with fine soloing from Joe and Joel. To an uptempo beat Joe's harp meshes with Chuck's organ and Joel gives us a great solo as Oscar sings of the financial difficulties that people have living in big cities, many

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ending up out in the suburbs where rents are more affordable in another well-observed social commentary entitled “Gotta Move Out To The Suburbs”.

Oscar was on lead vocals for the first three tracks but Joe takes over on his own “Cash Box Boogie” and his relaxed vocal style fits well with the background chorus vocal and Chuck’s great piano, Joel upping the pace with his solo. John Lee Hooker’s “Hobo Blues” finds Oscar singing the familiar lyrics accompanied only by Joel’s guitar before Joe returns on the gently swinging “Baby Without You” which gets the toes tapping as Joel releases another of his deceptively simple solos to great effect. Joe stays at the mike for “Juju” which has a latin lilt enhanced by producer Alex Hall’s shaker. Willie Love’s “Everybody’s Fishin’” is a great choice to cover with Oscar really enjoying himself above the superb rhythm section of Beau on upright and Mark on drums, Joe and Joel both being encouraged by Oscar to step up for a telling solo. Jimmy Rogers’ “Out On The Road” is slow Chicago blues at its best, Joe’s harp and Chuck’s piano weaving their magic around the Brad/Kenny rhythm section.

Next Joe takes the vocals on two more of his compositions: “Sugar Pea” is a country blues with very relaxed vocals, upright bass and gentle guitar prompts from Joel; “I Miss You Miss Anne” is more like early rock and roll with some country influences, most evident in Joel’s solo. The final cover choice is “I’m A Real Lover”, a song by Honey Boy Allen, Oscar extolling his romantic qualities to the object of his attentions. The album closes with Joe’s instrumental harp feature “Quarter To Blue” which is certainly an apt title as Joe ranges far and wide on harp with Billy and Joel trading tasteful licks in the background.

Overall this is another very successful disc by the Cash Box Kings who continue to keep Chicago blues traditions alive whilst adding contemporary issues to the lyrics. It’s an effective strategy that leaves the CBKs in a unique category and makes this an easy one to recommend.
--- John Mitchell, bluesblastmagazine.com

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